

[Mrs. George Andrews]

W14987 Conn. 1938-9 Andrews

Mrs. George Andrews, a sprightly lady of eighty two, lives in an old, but neatly painted house of the salt box type an South Road, Northfield. A city dweller, accustomed to cramped rooms and small apartments, would be struck immediately by the spaciousness of these old homes, built quite evidently for large families, but occupied in these times often by elderly couples who shut off the old fashioned living rooms in winter, live in the kitchen until bedtime, and then retire to cold bedrooms; or shared in some instances with another family who live in upper rooms made as comfortable as possible with a minimum of expense.

Mrs. Andrews' home conforms to type, except that she seems to occupy it completely alone, for her husband has, in village phraseology, gone to some of his reward, and there in no evidence of anyone to help the old lady with household tasks. She is exceedingly deaf, and uses an old fashioned ear trumpet, which is cumbersome, but which she manipulates with surprising dexterity. She has, she confesses, been engaged in a bit of writing hereself her-self —the genealogy of the Andrews family.

“And besides that I've been helping Mr. Humiston with the Northfield scrapbooks. I'm working on the last one now. Have you been to see Mr. Humiston? I'm sure he'd let you see them, if you called some day when he had plenty of time. He keeps them looked up, you see. Says they're too valuable for handling by the general public. They were left to the library by Mr. Wooster, and we've been adding to them ever since, so that they 2 contain a complete history of the village, right down to the present.

“The Pecks? Well, I knew Howard and Henry, of course, and Will, and the sister, but if you want anything about the old man, you'll have to find somebody who's been here longer

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than me. You see I've only lived in Northfield since the blizzard. Yes, the blizzard of eighty-eight. That was the year we came here. We were married in eighteen eighty, my husband and I, and lived in Danbury for eight years, and then we came here. Mr. Andrews bought this property.

“Old Mr. Peck was dead when we came here. My husband was a native of Northfield, and I've often heard him talk about the old man. He was what they called a “cold water” man. That's what they called temperance people in those days. I remember the mill, of course, and the Peck brothers. I think I've got a poem by Howard around here somewhere. You just take a look through this scrapbook and I'll see if I can find the poem. There may be something here you'd like to see.”

Mrs. Andrews hands me the book, a tthick volumn thick volume with clippings neatly pasted on heavy gray paper. Most of them have been taken from the feature section of the Waterbury Sunday paper, but a considerable number are out of the Thomaston Express, a weekly. Even columns of “briefs , “ those personal items dear to the heart of the rural dweller, have been culled from weekly and daily papers and methodically pasted in the book, and there are scores of obituaries all dated heavily in ink.

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Many of the items are printed under the name of James Catlin, well known in this section as a historian but who now lives at the home of a niece in New Haven. Following are excerpts from Mr. Catlin's writings:

“In the olden days of ‘general training’ there was a Northfield Company, which met for training and inspection once a week. Sometimes some of the men were tired and stayed at home, in which case they were fined four dollars. One man, who appeared in a fantastical costume, was fined \$24 by the colonel..”

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“The mail was brought from New Haven by post by a rider who came once a week, but later the direct post road and stage coach route from Hartford to Albany passed through the village. The Turner tavern was the stopping place for the stage.”

“John Catlin bought the Turner tavern and remodeled it, and in 1842 established a private school. Among the boys who attended were several who later became famous, including Orville H. Platt, United States senator, the Seymour brothers, and others. There were at one time three ball rooms in the village and dancing was fashionable..”

“In 1831 a great religious awakening took place in the land. Northfield people were so affected that meetings were held in homes and churches nearly every night and fifty five persons joined the Congregational church that year.

“Parson Camp one Sunday exchanged pulpits with the Wolcott minister. Whether the Wolcott hills looked more barren and forlorn than his own, or just what was the connection with his 4 sermon is not recorded, but he announced Isaac Watt's hymn, which begins: ‘Lord What a Wretched Land Is This That Yields Us No Supply—’ The reading of the lines was no sooner finished than the chorister announced in tones audible to the entire congregation the tune, ‘Northfield.’

“John Catlin organized the ‘Northfield Washingtonian Temperance Society,’ and they had their ‘Cold Water Army’ with picnics and parades. Cider was the universal family drinks drink . There were three or four distilleries and fourteen cider mills within the limits of the society, which at one time had 250 members. Instances are recorded of cider selling for as low as 88 cents per barrel.

Mrs. Andrews, who has been rummaging busily in a small cupboard, chuckles triumphantly. “Knew I'd find it,” she says, handing me the enclosed poem. “You can have that. I don't know where 'twas printed, but I know I've had it around here for a long time.

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“Old Man Peck wrote poetry, took, I've heard, but I don't believe I have any of it. I've an idea there might be some in those older scrapbooks. What'd you say this was for? History? Oh, I see. There was a lady around here last summer from Litchfield, gathering material for a church history, she sent all her material to Hartford, and she told me afterwards they told her the stuff she got from me was the best of all. What do you think of that?

“If you want to know something about old man Peck, you'll have to see somebody who's lived here longer'n me. Why don't 5 you go down to see the Marshes? They're an old couple, live on the Gulf road down here. They must be close to ninety, both of 'em.”